

PLUTARCH OF CHAERONEA AND PORPHYRY ON TRANSMIGRATION – WHO IS THE AUTHOR OF STOBAEUS I 445.14–448.3 (W.-H.)?¹

The passage in question, an allegorical interpretation of *Odyssey* 10.239–40, which can be found in John Stobaeus' *Anthology* in the section on the soul (περὶ ψυχῆς), is attributed to Porphyry by the manuscripts. Bernardakis, the Greek editor of Plutarch, nevertheless adopted it as *fragmentum incertum* 146a in the seventh volume of his edition of the *Moralia*.² Sandbach followed him in this and printed the passage as fr. 200 in his collection of Plutarchan fragments.³ However, that the issue is still far from being settled became clear with the publication of Smith's collection of the fragments of Porphyry in 1993, where the text can be found as number 382, grouped among Porphyry's remaining *Homerica*.⁴ He was followed by M. Zambon in his book on Porphyry and Middle Platonism.⁵

I propose here to argue in favour of an attribution to Plutarch. My conviction rests on the fact that (1) it can be concluded from W. Deuse's results that the content of the fragment is almost certainly not Porphyrian;⁶ (2) on the basis of language and style Plutarch, as will be shown below, is to be credited the authorship; (3) an explanation can nevertheless be given why the passage in question is attributed to Porphyry in Stobaeus' *Anthology*.

As to the first point, I shall provide a short summary of Deuse's account, who for the first time systematically tried to solve the question of the authorship of the fragment. Against Dörrie he could conclusively show that the text displays a literal interpretation of transmigration into animals.⁷ The word *σῶμα* is mentioned thrice in passages where it becomes clear that an assumed metaphorical interpretation is untenable.⁸ This literal interpretation of *metempsychosis*, however, contradicts what

¹ I would like to thank M. Baltes † (Münster) and especially J. Dillon (Dublin) who have read and commented on a first version of this paper.

² *Plutarchi Chaeronensis Moralia*, recognovit G.N. Bernardakis, vol. VII (Leipzig, 1896). In what follows the text of the fragment in question will be quoted after the pages and lines of Wachsmuth/Hense's edition of Stobaeus.

³ *Plutarchi Moralia*, vol. VII, recensuit et emendavit F.H. Sandbach (Leipzig, 1967).

⁴ *Porphyrii philosophi fragmenta* edidit A. Smith (Stuttgart and Leipzig, 1993), 462–466.

⁵ M. Zambon, *Porphyry et le Moyen-Platonisme* (Paris, 2002), 82–84. See also the recent summary of the discussion in: Porfirio, *Sullo Stige*, introduzione, traduzione, note e apparati di C. Castelletti (Milano, 2006), 305–321.

⁶ W. Deuse, *Untersuchungen zur mittelpatonischen und neuplatonischen Seelenlehre* (Mainz, 1983), 135–48. It should be said that Deuse is most reluctant to attribute the fragment to Plutarch. I do not think, however, that his doubts are justified, see pp. 251–2.

⁷ See H. Dörrie, 'Kontroversen um die Seelenwanderung im kaiserzeitlichen Platonismus', *Hermes* 85 (1957), 415–16, and Deuse's reply (n. 6), 135–8. A. Smith, 'Did Porphyry reject the transmigration of human souls into animals?', *Rh. Mus.* 127 (1984), 277, confirmed this result independently of Deuse.

⁸ 445.24; 446.5; 447.20. Furthermore, one should not argue that our passage speaks about these matters in a mythical manner, since in 447.9–10 this is, as Smith (n. 7), 277, pointed out, explicitly denied (καὶ οὐκέτι ταῦτα μῦθος οὐδὲ ποίησις ἀλλ' ἀλήθεια καὶ φυσικὸς λόγος).

we know about Porphyry elsewhere.⁹ Plutarch, on the other hand, seems to have taken *metempsychosis* literally, as emerges from *De sera* 565D and 567E.

What is more, Porphyry frequently emphasises that the soul should be considered *unchangeable*,¹⁰ whereas the author of our passage in 445.21–3 explicitly states the opposite view (ὡς ἀφθαρτος οὖσα τὴν φύσιν καὶ αἰδίδιος, οὐ τι μὲν ἀπαθὴς οὐδ' ἀμετάβλητος). As Deuse points out, in Plutarch we find this possibility, apart from *De sera* 565C, *De gen.* 591D and *De esu carn.* 998D.¹¹

The next argument can be derived from a passage which John Stobaeus quotes directly after our fragment in question. As has been pointed out, the excerpt most likely belongs to the same lost work, for it starts with the expression *πάλιν αἰνιττόμενος*.¹² The text is an interpretation of *Odyssey* 4.563–64:

ἀλλά σ' ἐς Ἡλύσιον πεδίον καὶ πείρατα γαίης
ἀθάνατοι πέμψουσιν, ὅθι ξανθὸς Παδάμανθος

The author understands Ἡλύσιον πεδίον as the part of the moon which is lit up by the sun (τὴν τῆς σελήνης ἐπιφάνειαν ὑπὸ ἡλίου καταλαμπομένην), while the πείρατα γαίης are said to be the earth's shadow, which frequently touches the moon. All this is virtually identical to Plutarch's understanding of the Homeric line as given in *De facie* 942F.¹³ Porphyry, on the other hand, seems to have explained it differently in his work on the Styx, where he locates the Elysian plain near the Oceanus (Fr. 377, Smith).¹⁴

All these arguments are clearly in favour of an attribution to Plutarch.¹⁵ Deuse, however, is reluctant to give the text to Plutarch, claiming that Plutarch would not have thought it possible that a soul could escape the cycle of birth – a possibility

⁹ It should be said, however, that the situation in Porphyry is not entirely clear. While Augustine, *De civ. D.* 10.30, 12.27, 13.19 and Aeneas of Gaza, *Theophrastus* p. 12.1–25 (Colonna) both confirm that he interpreted transmigration only metaphorically, a passage in Stobaeus 2.163 ff. (cf. Deuse [n. 6], 148 ff.) seems to suggest a different view. Smith therefore has maintained that the Neoplatonist both held a literal and metaphorical view of transmigration, but the explanation of the passage in question remains difficult. For a discussion cf. Deuse (n. 6), 129–34, Smith (n. 7), and M. Baltes' review of the former (M. Baltes, 'Rezension W. Deuse, Seelenlehre' [= Deuse, n. 6], *Götting. Gel. Anz.* 237 [1985], 208–11). See, finally, H. Dörrie and M. Baltes, *Der Platonismus in der Antike*, vol. 6.2 (Stuttgart-Bad Cannstatt, 2002), 102–10 and 366–82. However, I agree with Zambon (n. 5), 31–45, that we do not have to conclude from this that Porphyry changed his mind during his philosophical career.

¹⁰ Cf. Deuse (n. 6), 143 and n. 51. In Porphyry *sent.* 18 and *Abst.* 3.7 are to be compared. For the later discussion of the problem cf. C. Steel, *The Changing Self. A Study on the Soul in Later Neoplatonism: Iamblichus, Damascius and Priscianus* (Brussels, 1978).

¹¹ Deuse (n. 6), 145. The interpretation of the latter passage is difficult, however. While Deuse (n. 6), 145, takes Plutarch to say that the *voûs* will change, Dörrie (n. 7), 416, n. 1, I think rightly, maintains that Plutarch here is 'very sceptical'.

¹² Cf. Deuse (n. 6), 138.

¹³ Cf. Deuse (n. 6), 139–40, and H. Cherniss' note ad loc., in: *Plutarch's Moralia*, vol. 12 (London/Cambridge, MA, 1957).

¹⁴ On this work of Porphyry cf. now Castelletti (n. 5).

¹⁵ We cannot agree with Deuse's supposition *ex silentio* ([n. 6], 148) that our text could nevertheless be attributed to an earlier Middle Platonic period of Porphyry, before he studied with Plotinus in Rome, since on the basis of such an argument everything could basically be Porphyrean (cf. n. 9, end). Also the *consensus omnium* among 'important Neoplatonic scholars', who gave the text to Porphyry, mentioned by Deuse (n. 6), 141, n. 45 – an argument which is also used by A. Smith, 'Porphyrian studies since 1913', in: *ANRW* 36.2 (1987), 726, n. 48 – does not mean much, if these scholars do not account for their view.

which is mentioned in the very end of our fragment (447.25 ff.). In the myth of *De facie*, however, this is certainly envisaged in the final stage of the eschatology, where the *νοῦς* departs for the sun (944E).

Before, in turn, embarking on an investigation of the language of the fragment, the following considerations may be mentioned: (a) we know that Plutarch paid special attention to the Circe episode, which is attested by his treatise *De sollertia animalium* (a fictional dialogue between Odysseus and one of his companions, Gryllus, whom Circe had turned into a pig);¹⁶ (b) the Empedocles quotation (B 126) in 446.10 occurs in a similar context in Plutarch's *De esu carniū* 998C, whereas Porphyry does not, as far as we can see, make any use of it.

As Sandbach and before him Bernardakis pointed out, style, vocabulary and rhythm all suggest that Plutarch is the author of our text.¹⁷ Deuse, however, rightly stresses that this first has to be proved – an undertaking which he himself considers impossible: 'Es spricht kaum etwas dagegen, daß die Fragmente aus einem Werk Plutarchs stammen, aber der positive Beweis läßt sich nicht führen.'¹⁸ Nevertheless, it is not entirely justified to accuse the two scholars of not having argued their case at all. Bernardakis, for instance, pointed to the fact that the author of our passage carefully avoided *hiatus*, while Sandbach detected a rather striking parallel between our fragment and a passage in Plutarch's *De sera numinis vindicta*.¹⁹

In addition to this, an examination of the word material employed by the author of the passage betrays its thoroughly Plutarchan complexion. A list is given below with what we consider important or problematic words and phrases. For passages in Plutarch, we mainly relied on Wyttenbach's *Index Graecitatis* as well as the *TLG*, while in the case of Porphyry only the *TLG* seemed to be a helpful though not entirely reliable tool.²⁰ However, it should become clear in the course of our analysis that this does not present a serious difficulty.

ἀμετάβλητος (445.22)	<i>Mor.</i> 99E, 953C, 1011A, 1111B, 1116D; twice in <i>Porph.: sent.</i> 39, in <i>Tim.</i> Book 2 fr. 51 l. 29 (Sodano)
μετακόσμησις (445.24; 446.8)	frequent cf. <i>Ind. Graec.</i> , though not in connection with <i>μετεμψύχωσις</i> ; not <i>Porph.</i>

¹⁶ Plutarch also used the Circe episode elsewhere. The passages are collected by P. Hardie, 'Plutarch and the interpretation of myth', in: *ANRW* 33.6 (1992), 4780–1.

¹⁷ See F.H. Sandbach (ed., trans.), *Plutarch's Moralia in Sixteen Volumes, XV, Fragments* (London/Cambridge, MA, 1969), 366, and Bernardakis (n. 2), xli–xlii.

¹⁸ Deuse (n. 6), 140 and n. 43. Smith (n. 15), 726, n. 48, shares Deuse's view.

¹⁹ See Sandbach (n. 17), 373 n. d. For reasons of convenience I have decided to quote the two passages in full.

Fr. 200, part (Sandbach); 447, 14–20 (W.-H.): ὅταν δὲ φιλονεικίαις σκληραῖς καὶ φονικαῖς ὠμότησιν ἕκ τινος διαφορᾶς ἢ δυσμενείας ἐξηγριωμένον ἔχουσα παντάπασιν ἢ ψυχὴ τὸ θυμοειδὲς εἰς δευτέραν γένεσιν ἀφίκεται, πλήρης οὐσα προσφάτου πικρίας καὶ βαρυπροσύνης ἔρριψεν ἑαυτὴν εἰς λύκου φύσιν ἢ λέοντος, ὥσπερ ὄργανον ἀμυντικὸν τὸ σῶμα τῷ κρατοῦντι προσιεμένη πάθει καὶ περιαρμόσασα.

De sera numinis vindicta 565D–E: ἡ μὲν γὰρ ἀσθενεία λόγου καὶ δι' ἀργίαν τοῦ θεωρεῖν ἔρριψε τῷ πρακτικῷ πρὸς γένεσιν, ἡ δ' ὄργανον τῷ ἀκολάστῳ δεομένη ποθεῖ τὰς ἐπιθυμίας συρράψαι ταῖς ἀπολαύσεσι καὶ συνεπαυρῆσθαι διὰ σώματος· ἐνταῦθα γὰρ οὐδὲν ἢ σκιά τις ἀτελής καὶ ὄναρ ἡδονῆς πλήρωσιν οὐκ ἐχούσης πάρεστι.

²⁰ A major problem, for instance, is the fact that Smith's recent collection of fragments is not included among the texts on the CD-ROM.

παλιγγενεσία (446.12)	7 times in <i>Mor.</i> (cf. esp. 998C); once in Porph. <i>ad Odys.</i> 18.79.10
ξеноπαθεῖν (446.17)	<i>Alc.</i> 26.2.5; <i>Philopoemen</i> 12.1.3; <i>Mor.</i> 132C, 601C, 607C, 733F; not Porph.
κυκεών (446.23)	cf. esp. <i>Mor.</i> 996D; more frequent, as one might expect, in Porph.'s <i>Homerica</i>
κυκᾶν (446.23)	more frequent, cf., e.g., <i>Mor.</i> 1081D, <i>Cato Maior</i> 45.4; not Porph.
γγγενής (446.25)	8 times in <i>Mor.</i> (cf. <i>Ind. Graec.</i>); not Porph.
συνενδοῦσαι (συνενδιδόναι) ²¹ (447.3)	<i>Peric.</i> 15, 1 (συνενδιδόναι ταῖς ἐπιθυμίαις), <i>Caesar</i> 31.2; <i>Mor.</i> 468D; not Porph.
ἐπισπόμεναι (ἐφέπεσθαι) (447.3)	<i>Crassus</i> 25.4. 29.4, <i>Agasil.</i> 39.3, <i>Otho</i> 7.3; not Porph.
ἀρχὴν ἐνδιδόναι (447.8–9)	favourite phrase of Plutarch, which he uses 12 times altogether (cf. e.g. <i>Quaest. conv.</i> 681D, 694D, 737B); ²² only once in Porph. <i>in harm.</i> p. 16 l. 17 (Düring)
ἐξανθεῖν (447.11)	frequent (cf. <i>Ind. Graec.</i>); not Porph.
ὀνώδης ²³ (447.12)	<i>Mor.</i> 362F, 525E; not Porph.
ύώδης (447.12; cf. W.-H.'s apparatus)	<i>Mor.</i> 535F; not Porph.
ἐξαγριοῦν (447.16)	more often in Plut. (cf. <i>Ind. Graec.</i>); also in Porph., e.g. <i>De abst.</i> 4.21
βαρυφροσύνη ²⁴ (447.18)	<i>Marc. Cor.</i> 21.1 and <i>Mor.</i> 710E; not Porph.
ὄργανον ἀμύντικον (447.19)	the phrase cannot be paralleled in Plut. nor in Porph.
ἀμύντικός (447.19)	<i>Mor.</i> 281A, 457C; also in Porph., e.g. <i>Quaest. Hom.</i> 76.16 and 82.11
προσιεμένη ²⁵ (προσιέναι) (447.20)	frequent in both authors; cf. <i>Ind. Graec.</i> and e.g. Porph. <i>De abst.</i> 2.45.21
περιαρμόζειν (447.20)	<i>Cam</i> 40; <i>Mor.</i> 51 B and cf. <i>Ind. Graec.</i> ; not Porph.
ὥς ἀνυστόν (448.3)	frequent (cf. <i>Ind. Graec.</i>); not Porph.

As regards the vocabulary used in the fragment, I was only able to find two words which do not occur in Plutarch elsewhere, namely *μεταμπόσχειν* and *Αἰαίη*, the name of Circe's island. While the absence of the latter is not bothersome (cf. *Od.* 10.35), the

²¹ Since the reading of P *συνδοῦσαι* does not fit the context, it seems best to adopt the correction suggested by Canter (*συνενδοῦσαι*). The fact that the latter is a rather rare word would make a corruption more likely. Hence it is more probable than Meineke's *ἐνδοῦσαι*.

²² On this phrase see C. Helmig, 'Die Weltentstehung des *Timaios* und die platonische *homoiōsis theō* – Zum kosmologischen Hintergrund von Plutarchs *De sera numinis vindicta* 550D–E', in: T. Leinkauf and C. Steel, *Platons Timaios als Grundtext der Kosmologie in Spätantike, Mittelalter und Renaissance / Plato's Timaeus and the Foundations of Cosmology in Late Antiquity, the Middle Ages and Renaissance* (Leuven, 2005), 17–18 with nn. 17 and 18.

²³ I read with Sandbach, and after him Deuse (n. 6), 136, n. 29, *εἰς ὀνώδη καὶ <ύώδη> σώματα*. For an excellent discussion as to why this reading should be preferred cf. Deuse, *ibid.*

²⁴ After Heeren's correction of the non-existent *βαρυφρόνης* of the MSS, which was nevertheless adopted by Wachsmuth/Hense and Smith.

²⁵ Sandbach's emendation, which Deuse (n. 6), 138, n. 33, considers 'probably right', should be preferred, since the MSS reading *προιεμένη* hardly makes sense in the context, although it is adopted by Wachsmuth–Hense and Smith.

former is according to LSJ used in the active only here, whereas normally one would find it in the middle.²⁶

We have seen that the language of our fragment does in fact point much more to Plutarch than to Porphyry. On the other hand, one could object, quite rightly, that the method used above is questionable. For if we compare the remains of Plutarch's and Porphyry's works, we have to admit that not much is left of the latter's undoubtedly once very extensive literary production. Therefore, one might conclude, the investigation of Porphyry's remaining texts is not very convincing, because what came down to us is a rather small amount of text.

Against such an objection I shall reply the following. It is one thing to study the word material of a certain author. However, it is quite another thing to study the style. Everyone familiar with Plutarch, I think, is readily prepared to admit that he frequently uses word pairs of which the two components are virtually synonymous ('Doppelausdrücke'). This is a characteristic feature of his style.²⁷ If it can be shown that some of these collocations of our fragment are used by Plutarch elsewhere, then, I think, his authorship becomes very probable. As the following overview shows, in four cases our search has been successful.

φθοραὶ καὶ τελευταί (445.23)	<i>Quaest. conv.</i> 729B (τελευτήν καὶ φθοράν); not Porphyry
μεταβολή καὶ μετακόσμησις (445.23-4)	<i>Sulla</i> 7.3; ²⁸ not Porphyry
συνήθης καὶ σύντροφος (446.21)	very frequent: e.g. <i>Mor.</i> 483E, 669D, 787C, 821A; not Porphyry
φιληδονία καὶ γαστριμαργία (447.13-4)	<i>De tuenda sanitate</i> 124F; not Porphyry

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Finally, the question has to be discussed why the fragments were wrongly attributed to Porphyry in the extant MSS of Stobaeus' *Anthology*. There are basically two possibilities. It might be that (1) after the lemma *Πορφυρίου* a lemma *Πλουτάρχου* dropped out, so that the *τοῦ αὐτοῦ* was in fact initially intended to refer to Plutarch. Or (2) the fragments must indeed be ascribed to one of Porphyry's lost works, in which he was quoting Plutarch extensively, so that either Porphyry himself did not acknowledge his source or this acknowledgement occurred somewhere prior to the passage from which Stobaeus excerpted. I think that possibility (2) should be

²⁶ See, for instance, Plato *Republic* 569C and Aristides *Orat.* 207.12-14 (οὐδὲ γὰρ ἐν τοῖς δράμασιν οὐδένα τῶν ἀγωνιστῶν ἀπολλύναι τὴν ἑαυτοῦ φύσιν, ἐὰν πρὸς τὸ παρὸν μεταμπίσχηται). In the latter passage it is said of actors changing their costumes. According to the TLG *μεταμπίσχειν* is not to be found in Porphyry either. Note, however, its use in Aeneas of Gaza *Theophrastus* p. 12.20 ff. (Colonna). There, the phrase *τὴν τῶν σωμάτων μορφήν μεταμπίσχεσθαι* [sc. *τὴν ψυχὴν*] occurs in a summary of Iamblichus' and Porphyry's view on the transmigration of human souls. The text, facing a German translation, is printed in Dörrie and Baltes (n. 9), 106-9.

²⁷ On the frequency and character of these word pairs see T.S. Schmidt, *Plutarque et les Barbares. La rhétorique d'une image* (Louvain/Namur, 1999), 15 ff., and the literature cited there.

²⁸ Cf. also fr. 178 (Sandbach) with an almost certain emendation by Wyttenbach.

preferred, since a parallel case can be found in Porphyry's treatise *De abstinencia*, where he is drawing extensively on Plutarch's *De sollertia animalium*.²⁹

Hoger Instituut voor Wijsbegeerte, Leuven

CHRISTOPH HELMIG
christoph.helmig@hiw.kuleuven.be

²⁹ In *De abst.* I 4–6 Porphyry is quoting *De soll. anim.* 964 A–C, though without referring to Plutarch as his source. The same is true of *De abst.* III 20.7–24.5, where *De soll. anim.* 959 E–963 F is used. While in *De abst.* III 18.3–20.6 Porphyry, this time by identifying his authority, is drawing on a lost work by Plutarch (cf. frg. 193 Sandbach). For the whole question cf. Porphyre, *De L'Abstinence*, Tome I, Livre I, texte établi et traduit par J. Bouffartigue (Paris, 1977), XXVII and Porphyre, *De L'Abstinence*, Tome II, Livres II et III, texte établi et traduit par J. Bouffartigue et M. Patillon (Paris 1979), 144 ff.